

## **Marshals describe capture of Silvers**

Police say jail escapee may have information on Jill Behrman slaying

by Kurt Van der Dussen, Herald-Times Staff Writer

December 18, 2004



**Jason Wojdylo, a deputy U.S. marshal in Indianapolis, details how law enforcement officers captured Kerry Silvers, who had escaped from jails in Lawrence and Orange counties. Staff photo by David Snodgress**

INDIANAPOLIS — Sometimes obsession pays off.

For the last 3 1/2 months, Jason Wojdylo, the supervisory deputy U.S. marshal in Indianapolis, has been obsessed with catching Kerry Silvers.

On Wednesday, the 30-year-old, two-time southern Indiana jail-breaker, was caught in Mexico as the result of a multi-agency effort Wojdylo coordinated. Police say Silvers may have critical information about the disappearance and death four years ago of Jill Behrman, a 19-year-old Indiana University student.

Silvers was spotted in Mexico less than a week ago, and in a little more than two days, U.S. and Mexican authorities closed a net around him and snatched him up.

Silvers was working as a teacher and computer expert in his new home town, little Martinez de la Torre on the Gulf of Mexico.

"The last 109 days this case has been my life," Wojdylo said of the search for Silvers, whom he wanted to catch because Silvers might be able to provide key information in the Behrman case, although he is not a suspect himself.

Jill Berhman's parents, Eric and Marilyn Behrman, attended the news conference.

Wojdylo had good reason to seemed pleased with himself and his law enforcement colleagues Friday at a news conference in Indianapolis. They'd apprehended perhaps Indiana's most-sought-after felon-at-large.

Silvers was wanted for escape from the Lawrence County Jail in May 2000 and from the Orange County Jail in April 2002. His 2002 escape was a reprieve, even if meant a life on the lam:

The escape forestalled Silvers serving a 63-year prison sentence in Lawrence County on his conviction there for multiple felonies, including carjacking, robbery and burglary. And it delayed his prosecution in Orange County on more than a dozen felony charges — including attempted murder — for the 2002 jailbreak in Paoli.

Orange County Prosecutor Kelly Minton said at the news conference that any idea of cutting Silvers a deal to help with the Behrman case was, in his mind, "not a possibility."

Meanwhile, when Silvers had escaped and vanished, it was a huge frustration to Indiana State Police Detective Rick Lang.

Lang heads the Behrman investigation and previously had interviewed Silvers about a conversation Silvers had with Uriah Clouse, the Ellettsville man who police have named as a suspect in the Behrman case.

Two women told authorities that Clouse had hit Jill Behrman's bike with his truck, then had taken her to Salt Creek North Fork, stabbed her to death and dumped her in the creek. But the story crumbled when Behrman's bones were found in a forest in Morgan County in March 2003.

Clouse and Silvers had been in jail together at one point, and investigators hoped Clouse may have told Silvers something about the case.

At Friday's news conference, Lang said he'd taken "great interest" in things Silvers had told him before his escape and flight to Mexico, but Lang said he was not free to say what more he wants to learn from Silvers.

Lang said since Silvers arrived in Indianapolis, "I can say at this point that he is cooperative. It remains to be seen what he will say to us ... Whether or not he will continue to speak with me is entirely up to him."

As for Silvers' capture, Wojdylo outlined the process that led to his apprehension in Mexico — as well as Silvers' path there.

Silvers and two other men had escaped from the Orange County Jail in Paoli on April 18, 2002, allegedly attempting to kill a dispatcher on the way out. The other two soon were caught, but Silvers evaded capture in the forests of Orange County for two days.

He then made his way to Louisville, and from there, Silvers went to New Orleans. From New Orleans, he traveled to Matamoros, Mexico, just across the Rio Grande from Brownsville, Texas. Silvers lived in Matamoros for a time, then moved to the state of Veracruz east of Mexico City, eventually settling down in Martinez de la Torre.

Wojdylo said every criminal makes "small but critical mistakes," and Silvers' was that he was getting money from his mother in Lawrence County. Wojdylo said Vickie Silvers sent her son \$15,000 over 15 months — something she may come to regret.

Aiding a criminal in flight is a federal offense, Wojdylo said, and Vickie Silvers will be the subject of discussion for possible prosecution by U.S. district attorneys.

"No doubt about it, Vickie Silvers made a lot of mistakes, and she knows it, and she knows I know it," Wojdylo said.

He added that Silvers' family had doubted marshals could catch him. So Wojdylo said he took great pleasure in calling Vickie Silvers late Thursday to inform her that he had her son in custody.

Before his capture, Silvers had become a big man around town in Martinez de la Torre — and hardly for bad things. He was teaching English to children in the local school, and his computer expertise was a major asset. He was doing well financially, driving a new Volkswagen Jetta.

"He was very prominent in the community and was doing well," Wojdylo said.

Until a week ago, that is, when he was recognized, and U.S. authorities were contacted.

U.S. marshals quickly put together a two-country, multi-agency effort to catch

him. Several U.S. marshals, headed by Chris Barfield, flew to Mexico City and on to Veracruz. They then drove three hours to Martinez de la Torre, where they began to stake out places Silvers routinely visited.

The fugitive was spotted tooling around in his Jetta. When Silvers stopped at a video store late in the day Wednesday, Mexican authorities closed in, followed by the marshals.

Silvers was taken "after a brief struggle," Barfield said at the news conference. His 972 days of freedom were over. Now, decades of prison face him.

Wojdylo said marshals flew back to the United States with Silvers early Thursday, after a night of doing the paperwork Mexico required for his extradition. They arrived in Indianapolis Thursday afternoon.

Silvers initially was held in a cell at the Federal Building, but Friday afternoon, he was transferred to the Indiana Department of Correction.

Wojdylo praised all the officials and agencies, U.S. and Mexican alike, that participated in Silvers' capture. He and others also lauded the "America's Most Wanted" show for being instrumental in making the public aware of Silvers and the Behrman case.

Another U.S. marshal, former Bloomington Police Chief Jim Kennedy, agreed.

"There were no turf battles. There were no egos involved. Just results," he said.

Wojdylo said he was happy for Lawrence and Orange counties because Silvers "owes 61 years (of unserved time) to the county of Lawrence, and I'm sure Orange County would like to add to that."

And Wojdylo, whose obsession with catching Silvers began when he saw the "America's Most Wanted" account of the Behrman case, said he hopes the capture leads to its resolution.

"It was 'America's Most Wanted' that brought the case into my living room," he said, adding he hopes it will lead to "closure" for Eric and Marilyn Behrman, whom he said "deserve peace."

He said it now falls to Lang, who heads the ongoing Behrman investigation, to wrap that up.

"My job is done," Wojdylo said.

*Reporter Kurt Van der Dussen can be reached at 331-4372 or by e-mail at [kvd@heraldt.com](mailto:kvd@heraldt.com).*



**Kerry Silvers is arrested by U.S. marshals and Mexican police in a small town in Veracruz, Mexico. He escaped from jails in Lawrence and Orange counties and may have information about the Jill Behrman case in Monroe County. Photo by U.S. Marshals Service**